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Fair View Mission Station

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BANANA GARDEN ON MISSION FARM

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Fair View Mission Station

A mission station in Natal, South Africa, is usually a portion of land set apart for mission purposes, where native Christians can live and enjoy the privileges of church and school.

Fair View Mission Station is in the southern part of the British province of Natal, which has the Indian Ocean for its eastern boundary. The station land extends to within half a mile of the sea. It is sixty miles south of Durban, the principal seaport and largest city of Natal, and about four hundred miles southeast of Johannesburg, the metropolis of South Africa.

The surface of Natal, rising gradually from the sea, is divided into three terraces: the coast terrace, at sea level; the midland terrace, 2,500 feet above; and the upland terrace, which includes the Drakensburg Mountains, on the western border; with snow-capped peaks over ten thousand feet above the sea. Fair View is in the coast terrace. It is about thirty degrees south latitude. The climate is semi-tropical.

The mission farm contains 2,300 acres of land, covering over three and one-half square miles. This land belongs to the Missionary Board of the Free Methodist Church of North America, and is used exclusively for missionary work. One fair-sized river and a smaller stream water the farm.

the Umzumbi (Bad City) flowing through the northern part of the farm, and the Njambili (Two Dogs) through the southern part. The surface is hilly. Bishop Sellew described it as a "series of sugar loaves." A missionary living near wrote that "it is hills rolling into each other, and out of each other, just a wild tumble of hills." There are beautiful, picturesque spots on the station, where blue sea, and deeper blue skies, waving palms, chattering monkeys, and birds of brilliant plumage charm the eye and please the fancy.

Mr. W. S. Woods, the business manager of the farm, is a regularly appointed missionary of the Board. He was for years a successful farmer in the United States, and the knowledge and experience thus gained have been very useful to him on the mission field. In addition to the superintending of the farm work, he acts as landlord to the seventy or more tenants on the farm; an unenviable task, which he has performed for the last fourteen years with such skill and success as has proven that the Missionary Board made no mistake in choosing him for this responsible position.

The seventy odd tenants, over five hundred souls, counting the women and children, who reside on the farm, belong to the Zulu tribe, and were all heathen when the farm was purchased twenty-five years ago. Quite a number of the original tenants have left for one reason or another, and their places have been taken by others. At present the majority of them are either Christians or nominal Christians. Each tenant has a portion of land allotted to him for which he pays an annual rent of one pound sterling without reference

to the number of acres. He is only allowed to build one house for this amount. If he builds two houses his rent is doubled. The people all work in the gardens, the men and boys usually doing the clearing and ploughing, and the women and girls the planting and weeding. They grow corn, beans, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, kaffir corn, peanuts, and a variety of native foods. Each family has a few fowls, and many of them have cattle, pigs and goats. They are not allowed to make or drink beer on the farm, and the banishing of this enemy has made them much more thrifty than their neighbors who live outside of the mission station, and who spend a good portion of their time in brewing and drinking native beer.

Most of the tenants live in wattle and daub houses, that is, houses with square walls made of sticks woven together, and plastered on the outside and inside with mud. They are thatched with grass. A few are still living in round native huts. Besides the native homes on the station, there are three iron houses occupied by missionaries. There is also a church built of brick with a seating capacity of three hundred, a brick school building of three rooms which accomodates the day school, a brick cottage for native teachers, and a brick building with some iron additions, for the girls' home. The church has over one hundred members. Two preaching services are held each Sabbath. A Sunday-school of over two hundred members is maintained, and weekly prayer and class meetings. Fair View ehureh supports its native pastor, and sends an offering to other foreign fields yearly.

Fair View Home is a boarding school for Zulu

girls. It has eight grades, two of which are in the vernacular. There are two departments, a primary and an upper department. The girls are taught housework, garden work and needle work in addition to the ordinary branches of study. The school gets a grant in aid from the government, based on the efficiency of the work done, and the average attendance.

The day school is aided by the government to the extent of paying the salaries of its native teachers. It is a graded school, having six grades, two of which are in the vernacular, and the remainder in English. Both boys and girls attend. The boys are taught gardening, and the girls needle work in addition to the regular school work. The school is in session nine months of the year. Attendance is compulsory under the apparent age of sixteen. Upon completion of the course, if they wish to continue their studies, the boys go to Edwaleni Training School, and the girls to Fair View Home.

The main problem facing us to-day is how to save the rising generation to the church and the mission. They have been to school and learned many things that their parents and their ancestors knew nothing about. They are not content to live the simple life of the home, nor to submit to parental authority. Their many wants require more money to supply them than they or their parents can earn at home, so many of them go away to the cities. This means certain ruin to the girls, and almost as certain to the boys. Many are employed by surrounding farmers, or in small towns. This takes them away from Christian influences.

and they often return from such employment, moral wrecks. If we had an industry of some kind on the station that would provide employment for all who wished it, at a wage sufficient to enable them to live comfortably and educate their children, it would be an inducement for them to stay. With plenty of land at our disposal, and with fair market and railroad facilities, such a plant should be self-supporting in a short time. It would take labor and money to launch it, but the returns in the salvation and elevation of this colony of people for whom we are directly responsible would amply repay any effort of the kind that should be made. Fair View is only one of our stations. The Free Methodist church has two others in Natal, at Itemba and Edwaleni, where practically the same conditions obtain as at Fair View. These people are under our control. A great responsibility and a great opportunity are before us. Will the church at home not come to our aid in this important work?

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